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THE PROGRESS OF THE JEWISH REFORM MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES.

THE most striking phenomenon in the religious life of the Jews of the nineteenth century is the rise and progress of the reform movement. Although this paper will aim to be an objective statement of an historical development, yet it may be well at the very outset to indicate briefly the distinguishing marks of this movement, which is so radical a departure from the rabbinical traditions. Apart from the purely external reforms that aimed to beautify, make intelligible, and bring order and decorum into the public service, such as prayers in the vernacular, the introduction of the organ into the synagogue, the institution of family pews, the worship with uncovered heads, and other changes which, with the passing of the years, have been gradually adopted by reformed congregations, there must be borne in mind, chiefly and above all, the principles which marked the new movement.

In the first place, rabbinical Judaism is "law." The law is twofold, written and oral. Every command of the written law in the Pentateuch, and of the oral law as codified in the *Shulchan Aruch*, is equally binding. The ceremonial law has equal potency with the moral commands. Reformed Judaism, on the other hand, claims that there is a vast difference between the universal precepts of religion and morality and the enactments arising from the circumstances and conditions of special times and places. Customs and ceremonies must change with the varying needs of different generations. Successive

ages have their peculiar requirements for the satisfaction of the religious nature. No ceremonial law can be eternally binding. No one generation of men can legislate for all future ages. Mankind grows. The Biblical books and the Talmudical collections, when approached in this spirit, yield wonderful results. The stream of change and growth is perceptible throughout, as Geiger so forcibly demonstrated. The universal commands implanted in the heart of man, and dependent on neither time nor place, as Ibn Ezra puts it, are the essentials which never change; the special laws, however, which arise from temporary and local conditions are not writ large in the eternal scheme of things. This test reformed Judaism applies to the traditions, and in all its development this has been its guiding principle.

Rabbinical Judaism, teaching, as it does, the lasting significance of all the laws and ceremonies, whether prescribed in the Pentateuch or developed by tradition, takes a peculiar stand in reference to such laws whose fulfilment is dependent upon residence in the land of Palestine. These laws, it claims, are suspended for a time owing to the dispersion; they are not abrogated, but only suspended, and will be again binding in the day when the Jews will be restored to the land. This brings us to a second point of difference. The burden of the thought of rabbinical Judaism is national. The hope expressed in the prayers is that the Jews may be restored to Palestine, again become a nation under the rule of a scion of the house of David, reinstitute the sacrifices under the ministrations of the descendants of Aaron, and worship in the temple rebuilt on the ruins of the temple of old. The Jews, in their dispersion among the nations, are living in a state of exile; their century-long sufferings are a punishment for the sins committed by the fathers while living in Palestine; when the measure of the expiation will be full, the restoration will take place. Against this doctrine reformed Judaism protests. It contends that the

Jews are a religious community only, that the national existence ceased when the Romans set the temple aflame and destroyed Jerusalem. The career in Palestine was but a preparation. As the early home of the faith, as the land where the prophets uttered their world-subduing thoughts and the psalmists sang their world-enchancing hymns, Palestine is a precious memory of the past, but it is not a hope of the future. With the dispersion of the Jews all over the world, the universal mission of Judaism began. The Jews are citizens and faithful sons of the lands of their birth or adoption. This doctrine has become a vital element in modern Jewish thought.

Connected with the change of the conception of Judaism from a national to a universal faith is the difference in the attitude on the Messianic question. Rabbinical Judaism believes in the coming of a personal Messiah; reformed Judaism, rejecting this, places its hope in the coming of the Messianic age of universal peace and goodwill among men. Following the thought of the great unknown prophet of the captivity whom, for want of the knowledge of his real name, we call Isaiah of Babylon, reformed Judaism applies the idea of the Messianic leadership to the people of Israel, not to any one individual. As has been well said, not *a Jew*, but *the Jew*, is the Messiah. Israel is the Messiah of the peoples of the earth!

The movement that has given practical expression to these thoughts is a product of the modern spirit. The whole history of Jewish reform is contained within the boundaries of this century, its origin dating from the year 1808, when, in Seesen, Westphalia, Israel Jacobsohn instituted the first changes in the ritual. It is frequently claimed that Moses Mendelssohn is the father of the movement; this statement is not borne out by the facts of the case. No one would for a moment belittle the great work performed by the German Jewish Socrates in making the acquisition of the culture of the time possible to his co-religionists by introducing the study of the German

language among them through the impulse given by his translation of the Pentateuch and the Psalms. Nor can there be any doubt but that the familiarization with the thoughts and tendencies of the day, the natural result of the induction of Jewish youths into the master products of contemporaneous German literature, led in great part to the birth of the reform movement. But Mendelssohn himself clung to the rabbinical tradition: on the one hand, he was a child of the eighteenth century, affected by the remarkable spirit of his age; on the other, he was a Jew, scrupulous in the performance of every jot and tittle of the law. His religious life and thought were a thing apart from the influences working upon his mental activity in every other field. Only, then, through having been the potent factor in bringing into Jewry the culture of the time through whose influence the reform movement was inaugurated can Mendelssohn be connected with it. It is not my purpose to trace the history of the movement in Germany, where it had its inception; sufficient to say that this movement of religious emancipation in Judaism went hand in hand with the civil and political emancipation of the Jews in that country, and that it can be understood only if studied in connexion with similar streams of thought in allied fields. To develop this thought would lead me too far from my present purpose. However, it must be remembered that the early leaders of the reform movement were such as combined with Jewish lore the newer learning acquired in the universities, which were thrown open to the Jews for the first time in the beginning of this century. These men felt that the peculiar conditions of Jewish life in the days of the ghetto were in chief part responsible for the form that the religion had taken. They also felt that the essentials of the faith should receive an expression in consonance with living needs, the legalistic element give way to the universal, the basic principles of the faith be accentuated, outgrown and outworn ceremonies be abrogated, and prayers which no longer

expressed the beliefs and hopes of the people be excised from the ritual.

Although these thoughts were first given expression to in Germany, and that country will always be looked upon as the birthplace of the reform movement, yet has this movement found its full, free, and logical development in the United States. It was, in most instances, German preachers and thinkers who, in the early days, shaped the course of the congregations in this country in their adoption of the principles of reform. There is therefore a direct connexion between the practical outworking of these principles in this country and their primal enunciation in Germany. True as this is, yet the very first appearance of reform in this country seems to have been a purely native movement, without any direct connexion with the agitations which were stirring the Jews of Germany so profoundly at that time. In the year 1824 a number of members of the congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, in the State of South Carolina, being dissatisfied with the services, memorialized the vestry to have the ritual reformed. As the first document of this kind it is interesting, and the main portions are herewith presented :

“Your memorialists seek no other end than the future welfare and respectability of the nation. As members of the great family of Israel, they cannot consent to place before their children examples which are only calculated to darken the mind and withhold from the rising generation the more rational means of worshipping the true God.

“It is, therefore, to this your memorialists would, in the first place, invite the serious attention of your honourable body. By causing the Hazan or reader to repeat in English such part of the Hebrew prayers as may be deemed necessary, it is confidently believed that the congregation generally would be more forcibly impressed with the necessity of divine worship, and the moral obligations which they owe themselves and their Creator ; while such a course would lead to more decency and decorum during

the time they are engaged in the performance of religious duties. It is not every one who has the means, and many have not the time, to acquire a knowledge of the Hebrew language, and consequently become enlightened in the principles of Judaism. What, then, is the course pursued in all religious societies for the purpose of disseminating the peculiar tenets of their faith among the poor and uninformed? The principles of their religion are expounded to them from the pulpit in language that they understand; for instance, in the Catholic, the German and the French Protestant Churches; by this means the ignorant part of mankind attend their places of worship with some profit to their morals, and even improvement to their minds; they return from them with hearts turned to piety, and with feelings elevated by their sacred character. In this consists the beauty of religion—when men are invoked by its divine spirit to the practice of virtue and morality. . . .

“With regard to such parts of the service as it is desired should undergo this change, your memorialists would strenuously recommend that the most solemn portions be retained, and everything superfluous be excluded; and that the principal parts, and, if possible, all that is read in Hebrew, should also be read in English (that being the language of the country), so as to enable every member of the congregation fully to understand each part of the service.

“In submitting this article of our memorial to your honourable body, your memorialists are well aware of the difficulties with which they must contend before they will be enabled to accomplish this desirable end; but while they would respectfully invite the attention of your honourable body to this part of their memorial, they desire to rest the propriety and expediency of such a measure solely upon the reason by which it may be maintained. . . .

“Your memorialists would next call the particular attention of your honourable body to the absolute necessity

of abridging the service generally. They have reflected seriously upon its present length, and are confident that this is one of the principal causes why so much of it is hastily and improperly hurried over. . . .

"According to the present method of reading the Parasa (Pentateuch), it affords to the hearer neither instruction nor entertainment, unless he be competent to read, as well as comprehend, the Hebrew language. But if, like all other ministers, our reader would make a chapter or verse the subject of an English discourse once a week, at the expiration of the year the people would, at all events, know something of that religion which at present they so little regard¹."

This memorial was signed by forty-seven members of the congregation. It was emphatically rejected by the vestry without discussion. This summary action caused many of those who had signed the petition to resign from the congregation. They formed themselves into a new congregation which they styled "The Reformed Society of Israelites." The formation of this first reformed congregation on this side the Atlantic, then, had its cause in the feeling that the expression of the faith was not in accord with the changed needs and conditions of the people. It was a movement from within; it was the people themselves who, longing for an intelligible service, sought to change the established form of worship. In the statement they issued, after the secession from the congregation, they declared that it was their purpose to discard the observance of all such ceremonies as had their origin altogether and alone in rabbinical Judaism, such as are not founded on the moral legislation of Moses, but, on the other hand, flatly oppose in many respects the spirit, the beauty, and sublimity which so singly distinguish that legislation and the lofty piety and virtue that it teaches².

¹ See "The Origin of Jewish Reform in America," by A. J. Moses, in *American Hebrew* for Jan. 29, 1886.

² See "Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges unter den Israeliten

It was not merely an aesthetic impulse that swayed these men in their desire for a reform of the public worship, but there was also a question of principle. There were certain articles in the commonly accepted creed to which they could not give assent. In formulating the creed that expressed their beliefs they omitted the sections of the traditional Maimonidean creed that declared the belief in the coming of the Messiah, the return to Palestine, and the bodily resurrection. The creed, as by them adopted, consisted of ten articles, as follows:—

“I believe, with a perfect faith, that God Almighty (blessed be his name!) is the Creator and Governor of all creation; and that he alone has made, does make, and will make, all things.

“I believe, with a perfect faith, that the Creator (blessed be his name!) is only One in Unity; to which there is no resemblance; and that he alone has been, is, and will be, God.

“I believe, with a perfect faith, that the Creator (blessed be his name!) is not corporeal, nor to be won by any understanding capable of comprehending only what is corporeal; and that there is nothing like him in the universe.

“I believe, with a perfect faith, that the Creator (blessed be his name!) is the only true object of adoration, and that no other being whatsoever ought to be worshipped.

“I believe, with a perfect faith, that the soul of man is breathed into him by God, and is therefore immortal.

“I believe, with a perfect faith, that the Creator (blessed be his name!) knows all things, and that he will reward those who observe his commands, and punish those who transgress them.

“I believe, with a perfect faith, that the laws of God, as delivered by Moses in the Ten Commandments, are the only foundations of piety towards the Almighty and of morality among men.

"I believe, with a perfect faith, that morality is essentially connected with religion, and that good faith towards all mankind is among the most acceptable offerings to the Deity.

"I believe, with a perfect faith, that the love of God is the highest duty of his creatures, and that the pure and upright heart is the chosen temple of Jehovah.

"I believe, with a perfect faith, that the Creator (blessed be his name!) is the only true Redeemer of all his children, and that he will spread the worship of his name over the whole earth."

From the very beginning the members of the congregations gave public evidence of the faith that was in them. In their services they made radical departures from the traditional ritual. On Sabbath eve the service opened with the reading of the ninety-second and ninety-third Psalms in English; then followed the recitation of the שמע in Hebrew and English; the ברכת שבע, greatly abbreviated, in English, with the exception of the אלהי נצור, which was recited in Hebrew and English; the עלינו prayer in English. Thereupon a chapter from one of the prophetic books was read, the congregation sang a hymn, the reader offered an original prayer, and closed the service with the priestly benediction.

The Sabbath morning service was opened with an English hymn and a prayer by the reader; then followed the thirty-third Psalm, the prayers אלהי נשמה and אתה קרשת in English, the שמע, the ברכת שבע, and selected verses from the Psalms in Hebrew and English; the prayer for the country, the reading from the scroll of the law, the sermon, an English hymn, a prayer, and the priestly benediction. On the holidays special prayers, appropriate to the occasion, were inserted¹. There was instrumental music. The congregation worshipped with uncovered heads.

This first reformed congregation existed but a few years. It had no leader. Laymen delivered the addresses and

¹ *Sinai*, vol. I, p. 172.

conducted the services. Good as were their intentions, and talented as some of them were, yet they had not the training to carry on the work; besides, there was bitter opposition from without. These reasons led to the dissolution of the society; but the cause of reform, though temporarily in abeyance, was to awaken into stronger and fuller life in the mother congregation itself, to which a number of the reformers returned.

In the year 1836 the Rev. Gustav Poznanski was elected preacher and reader of the congregation Beth Elohim. While in Hamburg he had been imbued with the spirit of the Hamburg Temple congregation, the foremost exponent of the reform movement in Europe, and after entering upon his charge in Charleston, he bent all his energies towards introducing reforms into the service. The synagogue having been destroyed by fire in the great conflagration of 1838, which laid a large portion of the city waste, a new building—at the time the finest Jewish house of worship in the country—was erected. While it was building, a petition signed by thirty-eight members, and requesting that an organ be placed in the new structure, was granted by the congregation in meeting assembled. The petition was accompanied by the written opinion of the minister to the effect that such a step was lawful. As is unfortunately always the case, the innovation caused strife and contention. Opposition on the part of those wedded to the old order of things was a feature in all the reform movements in the congregations. Religious reforms always arouse the bitterness of bigotry and kindle the flame of fanaticism. This is deplorable enough when confined to inner contentions, but at times the quarrels engendered were referred to the civil courts, a חילול השם indeed. Let it be sufficient to merely advert to these unfortunate accompaniments of the progress of reform.

At the dedication services held on March 19, 1841, the minister in his sermon said: "This country is our Palestine. this city our Jerusalem, this house of God our temple."

When, two years later, Mr. Poznanski advocated the abolition of the second day holidays, as not being Biblical in origin, a bitter contest was again precipitated, which lasted for a number of years. The outcome of the struggle was a victory for the reform party; the second day holidays were abolished, and other minor reforms introduced into the service.

I have given the story of the Charleston movement somewhat at length, since that congregation inaugurated Jewish reform in the United States. I shall in the following give the account of the movement in its general aspects rather than the history of special congregations. However, it will not be amiss to state at what time and under what circumstance the older congregations ranged themselves on the side of reform, particularly since Judaism in the United States is congregational. The congregation is autonomous. There is no chief rabbi, no consistory, no synod, no assembly; each congregation is responsible to itself, and hence it lies with the congregation, and it alone, to determine what its policy shall be.

The Early Reform Congregations.

With the exception of the Charleston congregation, there were no steps taken anywhere in the country in the interest of the reform movement before the year 1840. In all the congregations the services were conducted along traditional lines. In truth, with but few exceptions, the reformed congregations represent a growth, a gradual adoption of various reforms, in the ritual and the congregational polity.

It is noticeable that such early congregations as have from the date of their organization been reformed, grew out of societies, "Reform-Vereine," which were formed for the purpose of giving expression to the doctrines of reform. When these societies became strong enough they organized themselves into congregations. Such societies were the

foundation of the congregations Har Sinai of Baltimore, Emmanuel of New York, Keneseth Israel of Philadelphia, and Sinai of Chicago.

The first congregation organized as a reformed congregation was the Har Sinai of Baltimore. In April, 1842, a number of young men, influenced by the Hamburg Temple movement, formed themselves into a society known as the Har Sinai Verein; they adopted the Hamburg Temple prayer-book for their services, which were conducted by several of their own number. Three years later, in 1845, the Emmanuel congregation of New York, at present the largest congregation in the land, was organized by a number of young men whose purpose may be gathered from the following words addressed to Mr. Poznanski: "We fully recognize the necessity of a complete reform of the Jewish service, as at present conducted in the local German congregations; we have therefore formed ourselves into a society which we have called 'Cultus-Verein,' and have resolved to provide ourselves with such means and to seek such instruction and information as shall enable us later to conduct, in a congregation to be formed from our society, such a service as, freed from abuses tolerated hitherto, shall arouse and quicken devotion, and thus uplift the heart to God¹." The congregation was the direct outgrowth of the "Cultus-Verein." Its first service was conducted on the eve of Passover, 5605 (1845), in a room in a private house; the sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Leo Merzbacher, who continued as the rabbi of the young congregation until the time of his death in October, 1856. The next congregation to place itself in line was that of Albany, New York. In the year 1846 this congregation had elected as its minister Isaac M. Wise, who had recently arrived in the country. Under his leadership a number of reforms were introduced. At the service on New Year's Day, 1850, Dr. Wise was forcibly ejected from his pulpit by some opponents of his reform ideas. The primary cause of this act of violence

¹ *Sinai*, vol. I, p. 201.

lay in the following circumstance. In the spring of 1850 a public debate had been arranged to take place in Charleston between Mr. Poznanski and the Rev. Dr. Raphall of New York, a champion of orthodoxy, on the subject of the justification of the reforms that had been introduced by the former. Dr. Wise, who happened to be in Charleston at the time, was present, and took part in the discussion. Dr. Raphall put the direct question to him as to whether he believed in the coming of the Messiah and the bodily resurrection. Dr. Wise answered, No. When he returned to Albany the orthodox element in his congregation was not slow in making its dissatisfaction felt. The opposition culminated in the act of violence mentioned. As a result, the friends and supporters of the rabbi withdrew and organized themselves into a reformed congregation, the Anshe Emeth.

For the next step in the story of the reformed congregations we must direct our attention to what was then the western settlement of the country. The oldest congregations in the west were those of Cincinnati. In 1824 a number of young Englishmen organized the first Jewish congregation west of the Alleghanies, the B'ne Israel; in 1842 a company of young Germans formed themselves into the congregation B'ne Jeshurun. Both these congregations were at their origin orthodox, but with the election of Dr. Wise as rabbi of B'ne Jeshurun in 1854, and of Dr. Max Lilienthal as rabbi of B'ne Israel in 1855, these two congregations designated their sympathy with the reform movement.

The city of Philadelphia was, in the fifth and sixth decades of the century, the stronghold of orthodox Judaism, owing largely to the prestige and influence of the Rev. Isaac Leeser, minister of the Mickveh Israel congregation of that city, and the foremost representative of orthodox Judaism in the country. Any effort at reform in that community naturally met with the greatest obstacles, and the pages of the *Occident*, the organ of Mr. Leeser, present a vivid picture of the opposition superinduced by every

step towards reform anywhere in the country. Yet the spirit was aroused, and made itself felt even in Philadelphia. There, too, as in Baltimore and New York, some young men had organized a "Reform-Gesellschaft." Few in numbers, but strong in purpose, they maintained their organization for some years, until in 1856 they united with one of the existing congregations of the city, the Keneseth Israel, which had been formed in 1847, and in the intervening years had also introduced a few minor reforms into its service. From the union of this congregation with the Reform-Gesellschaft in 1856 the present Keneseth Israel Reform Congregation sprang.

In 1858 some members of the Anshe Maariv congregation of Chicago, being dissatisfied with the services and the course of the congregation, formed a society which they called the "Reformverein," with the avowed intention of organizing themselves into a congregation as soon as their number reached thirty. At the first public session of the society held on April 17, 1858, the secretary, B. Felsenthal, afterwards the first rabbi of the newly formed congregation, addressed the company on the object of the society. In the course of his remarks he said: "How can the abuses which have crept into our religion be corrected? We must separate the eternal and indestructible kernel of Judaism from its tattered encasings, must remove the antiquated notions, and make the service fruitful and intelligible by the use of a language understood by all. Not two per cent. of the members of any Jewish congregation are sufficiently conversant with the Hebrew language to invest the service with dignity or to clothe it with intelligibility; the whole service has been degraded to the level of a dead formula. . . .

"A small number of men have here combined to arouse new life in Jewish hearts. A spark at least is still smouldering beneath the ashes of indifference, and this spark must be fanned into flame. The Jews will not permit the work of their fathers, that has existed thousands of years, to be destroyed: they will show the world by

new progressive movements that they are still the chosen people, destined to become the Messiah of the nations of the earth¹."

Two years later, in 1860, the society formed itself into the Sinai congregation. The preamble² to the constitution adopted by this congregation expresses the purpose and object of a reformed congregation more clearly than any like document I have come across, and it may well be inserted here :—

"Whereas, there appears to exist among Israelites a large degree of indifference in religious matters, threatening to drag life more and more to materialism and degradation, and stifling all nobility of sentiments, all sympathy for higher pursuits, all appreciation of the more sacred boons of humanity, while, on the other hand, Jewish religious life, clinging to obsolete ideas and maintaining antiquated usages, has taken its course in a direction of which we cannot approve; and,

"Whereas, we share the conviction that a truly religious life is the most powerful agent to create noble thoughts and good morals; and,

"Whereas, especially the Jewish religion, having a past of four thousand years, most glorious and eventful, is evidently destined in the future too to act a most important part in the development of mankind, and in its onward course to the lofty position of the Messianic time coming :

"Therefore, a number of Israelites have associated with the avowed intention of fostering the inestimable inheritance of our fathers, of restituting the original spirit of simplicity, purity, and sublimity in Judaism, and thus to perpetuate the same and secure its duration.

"The means of attaining this sacred object are chiefly as follows :—

"1. A divine service, which, without divesting the same of its specific Jewish character, shall be in consistence with the laws of reason and truth, and which, in its form, shall

¹ *Sinai*, vol. IV, p. 154.

² *Ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 162.

be such as will meet the demands of our time, claiming public instruction from the pulpit as a part of the same.

"2. A sound religious education for the rising generation, by sustaining a school in which at least a thorough instruction in religion, Hebrew, and the branches connected therewith, be imparted—a school inspiring the tender hearts of the children for Judaism, and for everything that is good, just, and noble.

"3. The removal of usages and ceremonies partly outlived and partly based upon erroneous conceptions, and the substitution of others more vital, more truthful, and more apt to produce blissful effects, and the formation of such arrangements and institutions which tend directly or indirectly to promote and fulfil the objects of religion and to advance its professors to a higher stage of perfection."

These are the most important congregational movements in the early history of Jewish reform in the United States. Since 1860 the movement has made great progress; there are but few congregations of influence that have not adopted reforms of some kind, some to a greater, some to a less extent. Even such congregations as are considered conservative in this country would in European lands be regarded as reformed.

The census bulletin, 1891, of the last census of the United States, the eleventh, gives the following figures relative to the Jewish congregations of the country:—

Number of reformed congregations, 217; church edifices, 179; seating capacity, 92,397; halls, &c., 38; seating capacity, 3,630; value of church property, \$6,956,225; communicants or members, 72,899.

Number of orthodox congregations, 316; church edifices, 122; seating capacity, 46,837; halls, &c., 193; seating capacity, 24,847; value of church property, \$2,802,050; communicants or members, 57,597.

The great recent influx of Russian Jews has naturally increased the number of orthodox congregations; this accounts for the comparatively large number of such

congregations noted in this census. The past has shown that even many of these, after living in the country for some time, affiliate themselves with reformed congregations. It is the members of the reformed congregations, almost altogether, who are the leading Jews in the various communities; it is they, for the most part, who conduct the great Jewish communal and charitable institutions; it is these congregations that are, with fewest exceptions, the representative Jewish bodies of the land.

The Leaders of the Reform Movement.

Every movement among men, in order to issue successfully, requires ability, conviction, and enthusiasm in its leaders. Without any doubt, the reform movement took such firm hold in the United States because in its early days it was led and directed by men of great ability, strong purpose, deep conviction, earnest enthusiasm, and scholarly aims. The first attempt in Charleston collapsed because it was not headed by a capable leader. The earnest men who composed that first "Reformed Society of Israelites¹" failed to succeed because there was no one to direct them. It was fortunate for the success of the movement elsewhere that a number of strong men, dissatisfied with conditions in Europe and despairing of accomplishing their cherished aims there, emigrated to America and shaped the policy of the congregations. As we have seen, the people themselves were ready for the reforms; the people themselves had organized reform societies, but these languished until they were taken in hand by the men who stand as the true and tried leaders of those formative days. Mentioning them in the order of their appearance in American Jewish life, these will ever be regarded as the great pioneer preachers and workers in the cause of reform; Max Lilienthal, who arrived in New York in 1845; Isaac M. Wise, who came the following year, in

¹ Supra, p. 58.

1846; David Einhorn, whose work began in Baltimore in 1855; Samuel Adler, who was called to New York in 1857; Bernard Felsenthal, whose *Kol Kore Bamidbar*, "the voice in the wilderness," was raised in Chicago in 1858; and Samuel Hirsch, who took charge of the congregation in Philadelphia in 1866.

It is not my purpose to give a biographical sketch of these men; space will not permit it. But, in order to show how clearly they understood and defined the issues, I shall, in extracts taken from words spoken or written in those early years of their work, let them speak for themselves. In one form or another, they express what to them are the essentials and characteristics of the reform movement. In sermons of burning eloquence, or in disquisitions of calm reasoning, they published forth the faith that was in them.

Max Lilienthal (1814-1882) arrived in America in 1845. He was elected rabbi of three orthodox congregations of New York city, in which capacity he served for several years, but severed the connexion on account of the differences that had arisen between his views and those of his constituencies. His opinions were changing and taking a decided trend towards the principles of reform. He was one of the most active spirits in the organization of the "Verein der Lichtfreunde," a society formed in 1849 for the discussion and the spreading of the teachings of the reform movement. In a lecture delivered before this society in that year, he said: "The bridge between the past and the present is broken off." He retired from the ministry for a number of years, and opened a school. In the year 1854, however, he again entered the arena of active Jewish life by writing for *The Asmonean*; in a number of articles published in the columns of this paper, and in *The Israelite*, shortly thereafter, he declared strongly for reform. In 1855 he was elected rabbi of the congregation B'ne Israel, Cincinnati, which office he filled to the day of his death. He led the congregation along the path

of reform. Characteristic was the statement he made shortly after assuming office in Cincinnati, when refusing to conduct the traditional service of lamentation on the ninth day of Ab; he said that he considered the destruction of Jerusalem a reason for rejoicing rather than mourning, as it was the cause of the Jews spreading all over the world and carrying the light of monotheism everywhere. In one of the early articles on reform, alluded to above, he wrote¹:—

We are tired of seeing men violating the Sabbath until they have accumulated an independent fortune, and calling themselves orthodox nevertheless; we are disgusted at seeing men transgressing every religious ceremony in public life, and yet clothing themselves with the halo of sanctification. We wish to see this contradiction solved: we wish to know when religious ceremonies have to yield to the necessities of life and when they have to be kept at any price, subjugating life and its exigencies. In a word, we wish to know what in our law is God's command and what is the transient work of mortal man. Such an investigation will solve the contradiction between life and religion; will raise the Mosaic law to its divine purity; will do away with all the unfounded conglomerations of different ages; and will surely reunite the now distracted body of Israel in peace and harmony. . . .

Reform has tried and tries to raise the dignity of our worship. No one will deny that the worship as conducted in the old synagogues is unsatisfactory. . . . How many prayers are there unbecoming the country we live in; unfit for our mode of thinking, totally antagonistic to the changed views and feelings! Reform tries to find a remedy for all these abuses and to make the house of the Lord a house of true prayer and devotion. . . .

Whether agreed to or not, it is a fact that the belief in a great many things, that fifty years ago were considered holy and sacred, has been greatly shaken. No one will be quieted by such sentences as "the Minhag of Israel is as binding as the law of Moses." Men of learning and profound reasoning have clearly shown the historical development of so many of our ceremonies, and the belief that the rabbinical law, from A to Z, has come down from Sinai, has totally disappeared. Scientific researches have proved that all nations and times have added to the store of our religious observances, and that all therefore cannot be as holy as the Bible. Further researches will

¹ *The Asmonean*, vol. X (1854), p. 85.

restore our religion to its primitive purity and simplicity; will remove each and every contest; and unite us again in the firm belief in the Holy One, for whom our fathers suffered and for whom also we, their descendants, are ready to make every sacrifice. . . . We are no reformers from inclination, no reformers for fashion's sake, but reformers from conviction. We do not belong to that frivolous or arrogant class that do away and abolish because it suits them just now. No; what we assert we intend to prove; and where we shall move the abolition of any ceremony, we shall not do it without showing that the religious codes themselves entitle us to demand such a change and such a reform.

Isaac M. Wise (b. 1819) who, at the age of seventy-eight, is still active in his chosen field of labour, may well be considered the great organizer and indefatigable worker in the cause. From the moment almost of his landing on these shores he became a power in American Judaism. It is not too much to say that, more than any other man, he has stamped his individuality upon the history and development of Jewish life in the United States. Restless, untiring, zealous, his is the most prominent name in American Jewry. His activity of over half a century as organizer, editor, preacher, educator, spans the history of the reform movement. In an article written in the year 1854, he said ¹:—

Our religion contains better elements than a mere controversial and casuistical rabbinism, and these better elements must be considered the primary cause of its self-preservation. The Jew had the consciousness that he alone possesses the most philosophical views of the existence and nature of the Deity; of the nature, duties, and hopes of mankind; of justice, equity, and charity; of the several relations between God and his creatures, and between man and his fellow-man. With this sublime conviction he first stood in the midst of degraded and superstitious heathenism, then by the side of persecuting Catholicism, and finally opposed to a ridiculous mysticism. . . . The Jew, however, felt conscious of the verities of his religion, and therefore he loved them better than his life and worldly interests; he saw himself alone in the world, alone with his sublime ideas, and therefore he lived in his faith and for it, and the thousand forms

¹ *The Israelite*, vol. I (1854), p. 20.

which he observed only led him to his sublime ideas. It was this elevating and inspiring consciousness, and not rabbinism, which preserved Judaism. But now the idea, the sublime cardinal elements, are almost lost sight of in the multitude of thoughtless observances of rabbinical forms. . . . Judaism has become a set of unmeaning practices, and the intelligent Jew either mourns for the fallen daughter of Zion or has adopted a course of frivolity and indifference. Therefore we demand reforms. All unmeaning forms must be laid aside as outworn garments. The internal spirit of Judaism must be expounded, illustrated, and made dear again to the Jew. We must inform our friends and opponents that there is a Judaism independent of its forms, and that this is Judaism emphatically. It is therefore our principle of reform: "All forms to which no meaning is attached any longer are an impediment to our religion, and must be done away with." Before we propose to abolish anything we should inquire, What is its practical benefit? If there is none it is time to renounce it, for one dead limb injures the whole body. Another principle of reform is this: "Whatever makes us ridiculous before the world as it now is, may safely be and should be abolished," for we are in possession of an intelligent religion, and the nations from our precept and example should be led to say, "This is a wise and intelligent people."

A third principle of reform is this, "Whatever tends to the elevation of the divine service, to inspire the heart of the worshipper and attract him, should be done without any unnecessary delay," for the value of divine service must be estimated according to its effect upon the heart and understanding.

A fourth principle of reform is this, "Whenever religious observances and the just demands of civilized society exclude each other, the former have lost their power;" for religion was taught for the purpose "to live therein and not to die therein;" our religion makes us active members of civilized society, hence we must give full satisfaction to its just demands.

Last, or rather first, it must be remarked, the leading star of reform must be the maxim, "Religion is intended to make man happy, good, just, active, charitable, and intelligent." Whatever tends to this end is truly religious, and must be retained or introduced if it does not yet exist. Whatever has an effect contrary to the above must be abolished as soon as possible.

David Einhorn (1809-1879), the prophet of the movement, in many an inspiring sermon expressed the fundamental principles of reform. His words ring with the earnestness

of conviction, and are eloquent with the enthusiastic outpourings of a spirit akin to that of the prophets of old. Israel's Messianic mission, Judaism's true inwardness, these form the refrain and refrain of the remarkable utterances of this man, whose lips were touched with the coal of living fire taken from the altar of God. In the very first sermon that he preached in the United States, his inaugural address before the Har Sinai congregation in Baltimore, he stated in broad and clear lines his conception of Judaism. From that sermon the subjoined paragraphs are taken as indicative of his thought:—

Like man himself, the child of God, the divine law has a perishable body and an imperishable spirit. The body is intended to be the servant of the spirit, and must disappear as soon as bereft of the latter. This spirit is the doctrinal and moral law of Scripture, whose fundamental principles the Ten Commandments set forth exclusively; to them belongs also the Sabbath, which has a symbolical significance only in reference to the choice of the day. The Decalogue is the essence of the covenant between God and man; it is therefore binding for all times, places, and peoples, and was destined to become from the very beginning the common possession of mankind through Israel. . . . All other divine ordinances, on the other hand, are only *signs* of the covenant—guards and protections of the eternal and universal law . . .; these, from their very nature, cannot remain always and everywhere the same, nor acquire the force of eternal or general obligations. Not that man will ever be able to dispense altogether with visible signs, but the expression and form of these must necessarily change with different stages of culture, national customs, industrial, social, and civil conditions, in short with the general demands of the inner and outer life. As little as the ripe fruit can be forced back into the bud or the butterfly into the chrysalis, so little can the religious idea in its long process from generation to maturity be bound to one and the same form. And if the inner growth of the religious idea in Judaism demands such a transformation, the contact with the world calls for it none the less urgently. . . . The Israel which nestled on Mount Zion, more or less isolated among the neighbouring peoples, that, ocean-like, surrounded it, could and did fortify itself with quite different bulwarks than the Israel which traverses this ocean in all directions, which wanders through all districts with its spiritual possessions, and, willy nilly, cannot but recognize the demands made upon it to coalesce with the

peoples round about. And, in truth, the historical development of our religion has effected so great a change in the biblical ordinances, that during the space of two thousand years the observance of the greater portion of them has disappeared from Jewish life.

It is true, the piety of our fathers sought to retain a hold on these forms as long and as well as it could possibly be done; they lamented sore as though in their loss Judaism had sustained a fatal wound, and they comforted themselves with the thought that these laws were only in a state of suspended animation. Not forever and for aye, so mused they, would the glorious house of David, the magnificent temple with its sacrifices, and priests, and Levites be sunk into the dust; not forever and for aye would Israel remain an outcast from its ancestral home! At some future day the Lord would once again erect the fallen tabernacle of David, gather the scattered tribes of Israel into the old home, and let the sanctuary of Zion rise in all its glory! But the lamentation as well as the consolation rested on the same untenable foundation, viz. the *equalization*, or more correctly the *confounding*, of the religious form with the religious spirit. Hence both were invested with immutability, and instead of striving to spiritualize the form, the spirit was formalized and a ceremonial standard applied even to the moral law.

Long ago those prophetic voices had been silenced which, with unwearied enthusiasm, had extolled the *spirit* of the divine law as the true banner of Israel, about which all people would some day rally, and, compared with which, all sacrifice and fasting would appear worthless. Those prophets would have proclaimed at the destruction of the second temple: "Comfort ye! the old forms are and will remain dead, but out of their grave the freed spirit rises to spread its pinions over all the earth; out of the ashes of the destroyed temple of isolated Israel will gradually emerge that gigantic temple, whereof the Lord hath said *ביתי בית תפלה יקרא לכל העמים* 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples;' from the ruins of Judah a Messianic world will arise! Yes, often will you be forced to cement the stones of this structure with your heart's blood; but such a mission merits such sacrifices, and these sacrifices are worth more than thousands of rams and goats!" Thus, I claim, our old prophets would have spoken; and truly at the present time we are called upon most urgently to work earnestly and effectively in the spirit of the prophets, to proceed to make the proper modification of our outer and our inner religious life. Judaism has reached a turning-point when all such customs and usages as are lifeless must be abolished, partly with the object of retaining its own followers, partly to protect from moral degeneracy. In consequence of the

insuperable conditions of life there has set in a violent antagonism between practice and religious conviction which will eventually cease to distress the conscience. The continuance of such a state of affairs would be the greatest misfortune that could befall Israel. On the one hand, the most important ceremonial laws are violated daily, laws which are still considered incumbent upon the Israelite; on the other hand, religious wishes and hopes are expressed in prayer which do not awaken the least response in the heart, and stand in absolute contradiction to the true spirit of the Sinaitic doctrine. This must necessarily lead to one of two things, either that the religious sentiment will become completely dulled or take refuge in the bosom of some other faith. Experience has shown the futility of all attempts to breathe life into the obsolete and dead. Even those praiseworthy attempts to win back for the public service some of the old attractiveness by establishing an outward harmony must and will remain fruitless as long as, at bottom, they serve merely to hide the inner decay. There is at present a rent in Judaism which affects its very life, and which no covering however glittering can repair. The evil which threatens to corrode gradually all the healthy bone and marrow must be completely eradicated, and this can be done only if, in the name and in the interest of the religion, we remove from the sphere of our religious life all that is corrupt and untenable, and solemnly absolve ourselves from all obligations toward it in the future; thus we may achieve the liberation of Judaism for ourselves and for our children, so as to prevent the estrangement from Judaism¹.

The renunciation of antiquated religious notions and customs must direct our attention the more singly and completely to the essence of God's word, which is exalted above the change of times and places, and will be potent even though the earth wax old as a garment and the heavens vanish like smoke. No, no! we do not desire a self-made cult, our wish is not for a Judaism manufactured to meet the demands of aestheticism; no planing off of the Israelitish emblem, no excursions into the empty void; but, on the contrary, an Israelitism that is rooted in Sinai and wishes to bring forth new blossoms and fruits on the mighty height of a history of four thousand years. . . . The more ceremonialism loses its import and extent among us, the more necessary it becomes to grasp the Jewish belief in its uniqueness, a uniqueness which separates Judaism from all other faiths, even after the abolition of its whole ceremonial law.

These, then, are the beliefs which are the source of our strength, the fundamental reason of our unexampled endurance, the trophy of

¹ *Antrittspredigt gehalten im Tempel des Har Sinai Vereins, von Dr. David Einhorn, pp. 6-8. Baltimore, 1855.*

our historical struggle—the belief in the one and only God, who, eternal, invisible and incorporeal, reveals Himself to man alone in His wonderful works, but especially in man himself, pervading everything alike, the earth and the heavens, the perishable and the imperishable, the body and the spirit;—the belief in the innate goodness and purity of every created being, and especially of the godlike creatures gifted with reason, whose free self-sanctification no original sin prevents, and whose redemption and salvation no other mediation than their own free activity can effect;—the belief in one humanity, all of whose members, being of the same heavenly and earthly origin, possess a like nobility of birth and a claim to equal rights, equal laws, and an equal share of happiness;—the belief that all will partake of this happiness here on earth by the eventual amalgamation of all peoples into one people of God, from whose midst the Lord, according to the prophetic promise, **וְגַם מִמֶּנּוּ אֶקַּח לְכֹהֲנִים לְלִיִּם**, will choose also non-Israelitish priests and Levites; this people will recognize the Lord of the universe alone as its king **וְהָיָה יי לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ**. Then shall the blood-stained purple of earthly dominion be buried forever, and with it the whole illusion of glittering falsehood, selfishness, and persecution. These and like teachings, whose first promulgation had to take place within the pale of the narrow Jewish nationality for fear lest mankind at large might have been blinded by their splendour, are Israel's still to-day; the possession thereof is its pride, their future acknowledgment its only hope. Each of these doctrines contains treasures of world-redeeming thoughts, and it is our sacred mission to draw forth these treasures more and more from out the deep mine of our literature, to show them forth in all their glory, to make them practicable for active life, and through them enrich heart and soul¹.

Samuel Adler (1809–1891), the student and scholar, was active in the city of New York, where he served as Rabbi of Temple Emmanuel for nineteen years. He came to this country from Alzei in 1857. His sermon on the last day of Passover in that year clearly indicated that a new leader had been gained for the cause of Reformed Judaism in America.

Our situation is like unto that of the Israelites immediately after their deliverance from Egypt. Behind us lies Egypt, the Middle Ages, before us the sea of Talmudic legalism, whereof it may truly

¹ *Antrittspredigt gehalten im Tempel des Har Sinai Vereins, von Dr. David Einhorn, pp. 9, 10. Baltimore, 1855.*

he said, all streams and rivulets discharge themselves into the sea, which is nevertheless never filled nor yet ever cleansed through flood. Let then the rod be raised to cleave it! backwards we cannot go, to stand still means death. Then let us forward, forward across the sea. Reason holds the rod, reason is the leader. The Torah itself calls itself our wisdom and our understanding in the eyes of the nations. A violent east wind is being wafted, and dries up the sea in this land of freedom. The spirit indwelling here in the West, the spirit of freedom, is the newly-born Messiah¹.

Shortly before the Sinai congregation of Chicago was organized², its promoters addressed a series of questions to Dr. Adler, one of which was, "What course should a reformed congregation pursue?" His answer in part was as follows:—

The answer to this question would quite fill a book, and cannot be even fully indicated in a letter. However, in order not to leave you without any satisfaction, I would state that the first and most important step for such a congregation to take is to free its service of shocking lies, to remove from it the mention of things and wishes which we would not utter if it had to be done in an intelligible manner. Such are, the lamentation about oppression and persecution, the petition for the restoration of the sacrificial cult, for the return of Israel to Palestine, the hope for a personal Messiah, and for the resurrection of the body. In the second place, to eliminate fustian and exaggeration; and, in the third place, to make the service clear, intelligible, instructive, and inspiring³.

Samuel Adler was essentially a scholar, and preferred the quiet of the study to the excitement of active life. He spent the last sixteen years of his life in honoured retirement.

Bernard Felsenthal (b. 1822), who is now living in scholarly seclusion, was the most active spirit in the inauguration of the reform movement in Chicago⁴. As rabbi of Sinai and later of Zion congregation of that city. his voice and his pen were ever active in the service of reform. Firm and consistent, he has never wavered in

¹ *Sinai*, II, 534.

² *Supra*, p. 63.

³ Appendix to *Kol Kore Bamidbar: Ueber Jüdische Reform*, by B. Felsenthal, p. 37. Chicago, 1859.

⁴ *Supra*, p. 63.

his advocacy of, and allegiance to, that interpretation of Judaism which he set forth in the very first years of his activity. In the pamphlet *Kol Kore Bamidbar*, which, a clarion call, he addressed to the friends of reform in the year 1859, he speaks with no uncertain tone. From this pamphlet a number of paragraphs are herewith taken :—

There is a time to tear down and a time to build up. Thus speaks the holy book imbued with the spirit of God. Our age, in as far as it concerns itself with Jewish religious life, is evidently intended rather to build up than to tear down. But what shall be built up, what shall be constructed anew? The inner, deep-seated belief in God, the moral sense in all the relations of life, the attachment to and love for Judaism, the teaching of Moses freed of all heathenism and foolishness; with this must be combined the excision of all statutes and observances intended for other times, places, and conditions¹.

There is but one class of laws which, biblical or post-biblical, have eternal validity, and these are the moral laws, engraved by the finger of God with ineradicable letters in the spiritual nature of man².

A religious law, which has not its root in the spiritual or physical nature of man, is of binding force only so long as it is able to exert a hallowing influence on mind and heart, on the sentiments and actions of the devotee³.

By virtue of our mind, which we recognize as a revelation of God in common with the rest of nature, we distinguish the treasures of eternal truth in sacred Scripture from that which is the result of the deficient conceptions of early times and the incorrect ideas concerning the world and life, as well as from those laws which were intended for past and transient conditions

Holding this doctrine concerning the Bible, we the more certainly assume the right to subject the post-biblical religious sources and institutions to investigation, and to separate that which we consider true in principle and worthy of retention from that which is evidently unsound in doctrine and antiquated or irrelevant in practice. But we recognize our mission to consist much more in nurturing and building up than in abolishing and removing. Doctrines which we have recognized as true, but which have lost in great part their hold on our contemporaries, must be implanted anew and more firmly; institutions which have a hallowing influence on the religious nature, and which are like to enhance the religious life, must be retained,

¹ *Kol Kore Bamidbar*, p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

suitably changed, or, when necessary, created anew, according to the needs and circumstances¹.

Samuel Hirsch (1815-1889) was the philosopher of the movement. Although he did not come to the United States till 1866, yet, with his clearness of purpose and positiveness of conviction, he became a strong factor in the work of Reform Judaism, not alone in Philadelphia, but in wider circles. In his various books, *Die Religionsphilosophie der Juden*², *Die Messiaslehre der Juden in Kanzelvorträgen*³, *Das Judenthum, der christliche Staat und die moderne Kritik*⁴, *Die Humanität als Religion*⁵, he had fully and explicitly expounded his views on religion, explained the principles of Judaism, and set forth his interpretation of the meaning and symbolism of the ceremonies and laws. As an expression of his thought, I have selected the closing paragraphs of his dissertation *Die Reform im Judenthum*⁶, where he gives the conclusions of his reasoning:—

The need of the time is the highest law in Judaism ; all ceremonies are but means for the fulfilment of this highest law ; the means must however everywhere be subservient to the end, therefore also in Judaism. The demand that everything which hinders us from working for the maintenance and prosperity of civil society, with all our spiritual and material powers, be removed from our ceremonial practice is therefore religiously justified. . . . It is a serious misdemeanor against, and not an indifferent action towards, the spirit of Judaism if anything be retained which in any way prevents us from the fulfilment of duties incumbent upon the citizen as such. It matters not whether any ceremony which is not to be retained for the above-mentioned reason be prescribed in the Bible or the Talmud. . . . Even the most biassed cannot deny that in the regulation of the ceremonial law the Bible had only the Jewish state in view. True, it foresees the downfall of the Jewish state as a divine punishment, but it conceives the event to have been possible of prevention by the Jews through a change of conduct, and therefore it gives no precepts as to how the religious life was to be arranged

¹ *Kol Kore Bamidbar*, p. 17.

² Leipzig, 1842.

³ *Ibid.*, 1843.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1843.

⁵ Trier, 1854.

⁶ Leipzig, 1844, pp. 67-69.

thereafter. When the Jewish state disappeared, the people, as Holdheim correctly remarks, had no guiding principle to determine what, under the changed circumstances, should be retained and what must be abrogated. . . .

The ceremonies became meaningless, i. e. their meaning was no longer understood, and they passed current as the incomprehensible commands of God. Therefore to observe as many of the prescribed ceremonies as possible became the one and important principle. What was no longer possible of observance, as the temple service and everything connected with the possession of Palestine, naturally had to be relinquished. Yet this was regarded only as a punishment of God. God has abolished our sacrifices, our Sabbath and jubilee-years, because we are unworthy to fulfil these commands. Therefore the ever-repeated sigh, "Lead us back to Palestine in order that"—possibly to found there a state that should serve for the glorification of God? No, but—"we may pay our penalty there, that we may offer the prescribed number of sacrifices, &c." This is always and again the heathenish conception (so opposed to our time as well as to the Jewish spirit), that by the practice of ceremonies a service is rendered to God, and as though only the service in the temple at Jerusalem could be perfect because only there everything that God commands could be carried out. But our standpoint to-day is entirely different. We, and the world with us, have arrived at the threshold of the future that the prophets foresaw. A world-temple must be built unto God, for His name shall be praised from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof. The freedom of every man must be not merely proclaimed but realized, for all were created in the image of God. The sanctity of labour must be declared, for man has been placed on earth to work, to employ and develop his powers. God's activity in the history of the individual and of nations must be recognized and acknowledged. God gives the individual and nations the opportunity to use their powers rightly. If they undertake this high task they will live; if not, and they prefer mental sloth and material luxury to hard work, they will go to ruin.

Finally, we must bear testimony to the world, through our cult and through appropriate symbols and ceremonies, that this truth is confirmed in sacred history, inasmuch as there is shown in it how, in a rude, material age, a people, ruder and more sensual than others, was trained until it recognized and taught for all time to come the rule of spirit over nature, and how the spirit can retain this superiority only by free, spiritual activity. Therefore symbols must be retained in Judaism, symbols which shall give this testimony in a fitting manner both to the Jews and to the world. But the Jews of

the present day must, before all else, participate in the work of the age with all their powers; for this work is the object of Jewish history, yes, it is the be-all and the end-all of Judaism. The high aim sanctified by time and by Judaism is, that all men be free, all recognize God, all employ their spiritual and material powers with full and free desire, so that a throne be built for truth and justice on this earth, a throne which shall adorn the lowliest hut as well as the most glorious palace. Therefore no symbol can hereafter pass as Jewish which prevents the Jew from participating in and working towards the fulfilment of this object with all his powers. He may not be a mere spectator of the work of the modern age, but must give himself heart and soul to it, for this is the command of the God of his fathers, who only wishes to have right and love realized on earth, and therefore called Abraham from the other side of the river, and desired to make him and his descendants a blessing for the world through their deeds and their sufferings.

These men were the leaders to whose influence is due the decided trend that Judaism in this country took towards reform. Their work was, in the nature of the case, largely individual, but in one instance they, with others, met in conference and gave expression to a declaration of principles. It is this and other conferences of rabbis that will now engage our attention.

Rabbinical Conferences.

The first conference of rabbis of the reform school in this country was held in the city of Philadelphia, Nov. 3 to 6, 1869. Thirteen years before that, in 1856, there had been a conference at Cleveland, O.; this, however, aimed to be a conference of all the rabbis of the country of all shades of opinion. The articles upon which the rabbis assembled at Cleveland agreed were—

“1. The Bible, as delivered to us by our fathers, and as now in our possession, is of immediate divine origin, and the standard of our religion.

“2. The Talmud contains the traditional legal and logical exposition of the biblical laws, which must be expounded and practised according to the comments of the Talmud.”

The second article called forth strong protests from the Har Sinai congregation of Baltimore and the Emmanuel congregation of New York; on the other hand, the conference did not go far enough for the rigidly orthodox. The results of this conference were most unfortunate. The house of the reformers was divided; two factions arose, one in the eastern, the other in the western, part of the country. This division continued for years with resultant controversies and dissensions, but the breach has been happily healed, as shall be seen later on.

The decade following the Cleveland conference, being the years of the civil war and intense political excitement which overshadowed all other interests, witnessed no further effort at a meeting of this kind. In the years 1867-1868, however, the subject was re-agitated in the columns of the *Israelite*, but before the meeting was called a conference was convened by the Eastern reformers in Philadelphia in 1869. This conference was attended by the leading reformers from both sections of the country. The conference adopted the following principles, the first public statement made by a body of reformers on this side the Atlantic:—

1. The Messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state under a descendant of David, involving a second separation from the nations of the earth, but the union of all the children of God in the confession of the unity of God, so as to realize the unity of all rational creatures and their call to moral sanctification.

2. We look upon the destruction of the second Jewish commonwealth not as a punishment for the sinfulness of Israel, but as a result of the divine purpose revealed to Abraham, which, as has become ever clearer in the course of the world's history, consists in the dispersion of the Jews to all parts of the earth, for the realization of their high priestly mission, to lead the nations to the true knowledge and worship of God.

3. The Aaronic priesthood and the Mosaic sacrificial cult were preparatory steps to the real priesthood of the whole people, which began with the dispersion of the Jews, and to the sacrifices of sincere devotion and moral sanctification, which alone are pleasing and acceptable to the Most Holy. These institutions, preparatory to higher religiosity, were consigned to the past, once for all, with

the destruction of the second temple, and only in this sense—as educational influences in the past—are they to be mentioned in our prayers.

4. Every distinction between Aaronides and non-Aaronides, as far as religious rites and duties are concerned, is consequently inadmissible, both in the religious cult and in life.

5. The selection of Israel as the people of religion, as the bearers of the highest idea of humanity, is still, as ever, to be strongly emphasized, and for this very reason, whenever this is mentioned it shall be done with full emphasis laid on the world-embracing mission of Israel and the love of God for all His children.

6. The belief in the bodily resurrection has no religious foundation, and the doctrine of immortality refers to the after-existence of the soul only.

7. Urgently as the cultivation of the Hebrew language, in which the treasures of divine revelation are given and the immortal remains of a literature that influences all civilized nations are preserved, must be always desired by us in fulfilment of a sacred duty, yet has it become unintelligible to the vast majority of our co-religionists; therefore it must make way, as is advisable under existing circumstances, to intelligible language in prayer, which, if not understood, is a soulless form¹.

The conference, after adopting a number of resolutions in reference to marriage and divorce, adjourned to meet in Cincinnati the following year. The meeting, however, did not take place, because some of the men who were most prominent in the Philadelphia conference failed to appear. In the year 1871 a conference did take place in Cincinnati, after preliminary meetings in Cleveland and New York; this conference is chiefly memorable because it gave the impulse to the organization of the Union of American Congregations and the subsequent founding of the Hebrew Union College. I shall consider this in its place in telling the story of these two institutions.

In the year 1885, in the month of November, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth days of the month, the memorable Pittsburg conference was held. It adopted the following declaration of principles, the clearest expression of the

¹ *Protokolle der Rabbiner Conferenz abgehalten zu Philadelphia*, pp. 86–87. New York, 1870.

reform movement that had ever been published to the world :—

1. We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite, and in every mode, source, or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our Holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers, in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended, midst continual struggles and trials and under enforced isolation, this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.

2. We recognize in the Bible the record of the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as the priest of the one God, and value it as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction. We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researches in the domain of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age, and at times clothing its conception of divine Providence and Justice dealing with man in miraculous narratives.

3. We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and to-day we accept as binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

4. We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.

5. We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

6. We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason. We are convinced of the

utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past. Christianity and Islam being daughter religions of Judaism, we appreciate their providential mission to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfilment of our mission, and therefore we extend the hand of fellowship to all who operate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.

7. We reassert the doctrine of Judaism that the soul is immortal, grounding this belief on the divine nature of the human spirit, which forever finds bliss in righteousness and misery in wickedness. We reject, as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (Hell and Paradise) as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward.

8. In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relation between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society¹.

This platform aroused the usual storm of opposition in the conservative and orthodox camps, but it still stands as the utterance most expressive of the teachings of reformed Judaism.

There have been a number of local conferences which, after an existence of a few years, were dissolved. Two such were the Jewish Ministers' Association, organized in January, 1885, in the city of New York, and comprising the rabbis in the eastern section of the country; and the Conference of Rabbis of Southern Congregations, organized in April, 1885, in the city of New Orleans. These conferences have scarcely a place in the history of reformed Judaism as they included in their membership rabbis of both schools.

In July, 1889, the Central Conference of American Rabbis was organized in the city of Detroit. It has met in regular conference every year since then. It comprises

¹ Authentic Report of the Proceedings of the Rabbinical Conference held at Pittsburg, Nov. 16, 17, 18, 1885, *Jewish Reformer* for Jan. 15, 1886, p. 4.

in its membership, with scarcely an exception, all the rabbis of the reform school in the country. Although it does not exclude from membership any rabbi, the third article of its constitution reading, "All active and retired rabbis of congregations, and professors of rabbinical seminaries, shall be eligible for membership," yet it is a well-known and accepted fact that it is a body of reform rabbis. It is truly representative, including as it does in its membership, according to its last report, one hundred and thirty-three rabbis¹ located all over the country, from ocean to ocean and from lakes to gulf. The president from the beginning has been the venerable rabbi, Isaac M. Wise. In his annual address delivered at the meeting of the conference held at Milwaukee, Wis., in July, 1896, the president summed up what the Central Conference had accomplished. The eight years' work of the conference, he said, "records the end of the feuds and controversies of thirty-three years' duration, from 1856 to 1889, among the American rabbis and writers, and the closer union of at least one hundred and fifty of us in a covenant of peace and considerable unanimity²."

The notable achievements of the conference are the production and publication of the *Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship*³, its success in representing Judaism at the World's Parliament of Religions held at Chicago during the World's Fair⁴, its declaration on the requirements for the admission of proselytes⁵, and, above all, its uniting in one body the reform leaders of the country. It has even extended into Canada, and the meeting of 1897 was held in Montreal. It has published six year-books, which contain, besides the record of the proceedings, a large number of addresses and learned papers read at the sessions.

The principles of the men forming the conference were so

¹ *Year Book of Central Conference of American Rabbis* for 1896, pp. 172-177.

² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³ *Infra*, p. 91.

⁴ *Judaism at the World's Parliament of Religions*. Cincinnati, 1894.

⁵ *Infra*, pp. 92 sq.

well known that there was not thought to be any necessity for making a declaration of principles, notably as at its second meeting the conference passed a resolution to the effect that all the declarations of reform adopted at previous rabbinical conferences in Europe and this country be collected and recorded in the year-book, and be understood as the working basis of this conference¹.

At the meeting held in Rochester, N.Y., in July, 1895, the president, in his address, proposed for discussion and decision several questions, one of which, bearing on the attitude of reformed Judaism, must be referred to here, notably as it involved a far-reaching issue and concerned a question of principle. "What is our relation in all religious matters to our own post-biblical, our patristic literature, including the Talmud, casuists, responses, and commentaries?" The committee to whom this was referred reported as follows :—

Your committee, to whom that part of the president's message was referred which reads, "What is our relation in all religious matters to our own post-biblical, our patristic literature, including the Talmud, casuists, responses, and commentaries," begs leave to report that, from the standpoint of Reform Judaism, the whole post-biblical and patristic literature, including the Talmud, casuists, responses, and commentaries, is, and can be considered as, nothing more or less than "religious literature." As such it is of inestimable value. It is the treasure-house in which the successive ages deposited their conceptions of the great and fundamental principles of Judaism, and their contributions to the never-ceasing endeavour to elucidate the same. Consciously or unconsciously, every age has added a wing to this great treasure-house, and the architecture and construction of each wing bear the indelible marks of the peculiar characteristics of the time in which it was erected. Our age is engaged in the same task. We too have to contribute to the enlargement of this treasure-house ; but we have to do it in our own way, as the spirit of our time directs, without any slavish imitation of the past.

To have awakened the consciousness of this historic fact is the great merit of Reform Judaism ; and the more this consciousness grows upon our mind, the more the conditions and environments of

¹ *Year Book* for 1890-91, pp. 31 and 80-125.

our modern life force it upon us, the more persistently we have to assert: that our relations in all religious matters are in no way authoritatively and finally determined by any portion of our post-biblical and patristic literature¹.

This report was considered at the last session of the conference. Many of the members had left for their homes, so that only twenty were present. The report called forth long and warm discussion. A number of the most pronounced reformers took the ground that the report did not go far enough, and that it ought to have stated the attitude also in reference to the biblical books. They declared that in the stream of tradition the biblical books must be considered with the post-biblical, that the two cannot be separated. Therefore they voted against the report of the committee, which was carried by the narrow margin of eleven to nine. This action of the conference called forth great excitement. The conservative press naturally interpreted the vote as an almost equal declaration in favour of the binding authority of the Talmud, misrepresenting altogether the opinions of those who had voted in the negative. In his address at the opening of the next conference in July, 1896, the president referred to the matter as follows:—

The vote of eleven to nine "placed the conference on record that nine out of twenty hold the post-biblical or patristic literature as authoritative and final for us in all religious matters. So the vote was generally understood by outsiders, and this placed the conference in a ridiculous position of inconsistency, the same which I. M. Jost charges on German conferences in his time. As this was positively not the import of that vote, it places the nine of the opposition in a false light before the world as being adherents and advocates of orthodox rabbinism. It will therefore be necessary that a reconsideration of the said vote be moved by some one who voted on it in the affirmative. We must sustain the position we took from the beginning: that this conference consists of the reform element only and exclusively, and its standpoint is historical Judaism, that is the Judaism of all ages, and not that of one period, class, or people. We

¹ *Year Book for 1895*, p. 63.

cannot submit to the legalism of the Talmud, the Kabbalism of the Sohar, the literalism of the Karaites, or even the rationalism of Maimonides and Mendelssohn, because either of them was a child of his respective age and not of the Judaism of all ages. And this only and exclusively is our basis¹."

The president's address was, as usual, referred to a committee of three; two of these were among the nine that had voted in the negative at the preceding conference. In their report they stated in reference to this part of the address:—

Those who were present at the conference held last year in Rochester, and who heard the discussion of the report of the Committee on Post-Biblical Literature, know full well that the nine who voted against it as it was presented and adopted had no intention of declaring in favour of the Talmud and the later codifications as an authority in religious matters, and if their vote was so construed, it was certainly misunderstood².

This was unanimously adopted by the conference, and thus its tendency of thought as a reform body once again emphasized.

The Prayer Book.

The public expression of a faith is its public service. That reforms were necessary here was the conviction of all the early reformers. The language of prayer, albeit the sacred tongue, was unintelligible to most of the worshippers. Customs were in vogue at the service that detracted much from making it devotional and reverential. In the prayers hopes were given expression to, and petitions directed to the throne of divine grace, which were not living hopes and petitions. Doctrines were expressed that were no longer the beliefs of the people. Naturally, attention was almost immediately given to making the public service a true reflection of the changes that had come upon men's thoughts. The traditional service was modified and changed. We have already seen how radically the first reformed congrega-

¹ *Year Book* for 1896, pp. 16, 17.

² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

tion changed the order of service¹. The first attempt at a new prayer book in this country, however, was that made by the Rev. Dr. L. Merzbacher, and adopted as its ritual by the Emmanuel congregation of New York in 1854. This prayer book greatly abbreviated the traditional service, and although not as thoroughly and consistently reformed as it might have been, was yet a great step forward at the time. In the year 1856, shortly after landing in this country, Dr. David Einhorn published the first part of his *Olatz Tamid: a Prayer Book for Jewish Reform Congregations*. At the same time he set forth clearly the principles that had guided him in writing the book². He expressed the matter well when he wrote—

It is a clear and undeniable fact that the traditional service has no charm for the present generation; the old prayers have become for the most part untruths for present conditions and views, and neither the organ nor the choir, nor yet youthful memories that cluster about the synagogue, are sufficient to cover the bareness, to banish the lack of devotion, to fill again the vacant places. Salvation will come only from a complete reform of the public service which, founded on principle, will enable the worshipper to find himself and his God in the sacred halls. . . . Dogmatically, this prayer book is differentiated from the traditional order by the omission of prayers for the restoration of the sacrificial cult and the return to Palestine, i. e. the re-institution of the Jewish kingdom, as well as the change of the doctrine of bodily resurrection into the idea of a purely spiritual immortality.

Although the book followed the traditional order of prayers in a measure, and retained a number of prayers in the Hebrew, yet the greater part of the ritual was in the vernacular. In the Hebrew text, too, such changes as were necessitated by the changes of belief indicated above were made.

There now appeared from time to time a number of prayer books, such as the *Minhag America*, by Isaac M. Wise, adopted by most of the congregations in the southern

¹ Supra, p. 60.

² *Sinai*, vol. I, pp. 91-100, 129-139.

and western sections of the country; the *Abodath Yisrael*, by B. Szold and M. Jastrow; the *Hadar Hattefillah*, by A. Huebsch; besides these, quite a number of congregations had individual prayer books prepared by their ministers for their use. There was thus a wondrous variety. As time wore on it was felt that there was a great need for a prayer book that could be adopted by the reformed congregations everywhere. There were obstacles in the way of taking any one of the existing books. At the meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis held in Baltimore in 1891, the subject of a Union Prayer Book was first broached. A ritual committee was appointed that laboured for three years, and at the meeting in Atlantic City in July, 1894, the book as submitted by the committee was ratified. This book expresses in its prayers and meditations the doctrines of reformed Judaism. In the report accompanying the MS. of the second part of the prayer book, the services for New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement, the Ritual Committee stated the principle that had guided it in its work:—

Imbued with the earnestness of the task that was laid upon us, we endeavoured to conform the ritual for these two great holidays to the spirit and principle of the first part of our Union Prayer Book, to unite the soul-stirring reminiscences of the past with the urgent demands of the present, and to enhance the solemnity of the service by combining the two essential elements, the ancient time-honoured formulas with modern prayers and meditations in the vernacular¹.

That the book has met the requirements and the expectations of the congregations may be gathered from the fact that within the short space of three years one hundred and ten congregations, among them many of the largest and most influential in the land, have adopted it as their ritual. This has been the most decided step towards a real union that the reformed congregations of the country have yet taken.

¹ *Year Book* for 1894-95, p. 32.

The Proselyte Question.

Is Judaism a missionary religion? Shall Judaism put forth special efforts to induce men and women not born in the faith to become identified with it? These questions have often agitated Jewish thinkers, and there are the two well-defined positions, the advocates of the one claiming that Judaism's truth will eventually prevail without active efforts being put forth to gain adherents to its doctrines, while others hold that there are at present great opportunities for Judaism, and that if the proper steps were taken, many who are dissatisfied with other creeds will eagerly take refuge within its ranks. The interesting symposium published in the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW for January, 1897, well brought out the arguments pro and con. If then there be those who desire to become Jews, what shall be the requirements for admission into the faith? Is a simple expression of this desire and a confession of faith sufficient, or shall initiatory rites be required? Notably has it been the question of circumcision about which the controversy has turned. If true to its own professions, must not reformed Judaism declare that the expression of belief in the distinguishing doctrines of the faith on the part of the would-be proselyte is all-sufficient for entrance into the religion? This question has come up time and again for discussion, both privately and in rabbinical conferences, in this country, and decided expression has been given and decided action taken.

The first public statement in the matter, though it did not touch the question proper, was the resolution passed by the Philadelphia conference in 1869:—

The male child of a Jewish mother—in accordance with a never-disputed principle of Judaism—is no less than her female child to be considered a Jew by descent, even though he be uncircumcised¹.

¹ *Protokolle*, p. 39.

In the discussion precipitated by this resolution the question of the circumcision of proselytes was debated; although the greater number of the rabbis present expressed themselves to the effect that circumcision should not be considered a *conditio sine qua non* for admission into Judaism¹, yet there was no further action taken than that indicated by the resolution.

In 1878 the Rev. M. Spitz of Milwaukee, Wis., addressed a letter to the rabbis of the country, requesting their opinion as to the right and advisability of accepting a proselyte without circumcision; a case in point had occurred in his city, and as he did not desire to act on his own responsibility he took this course. The letter called forth a lengthy response from Dr. B. Felsenthal, published as a pamphlet, *Zur Proselytenfrage im Judenthum*, in which the position was taken and defended from the historical standpoint that circumcision is not necessary. Dr. M. Mielziner took the opposite view in an article which appeared in the *Jewish Messenger*². No further opinions were elicited. Mr. Spitz refused to admit the young man without the initiatory rite. The next public step in the matter was the action taken by the Sinai congregation of Chicago at its meeting held on April 9, 1885, when it was resolved—

That the Abrahamitic rite is not an essential condition, the compliance with which must precede or follow admittance to membership in Sinai congregation³.

At the Pittsburg conference held in November, 1885, the question was again up for discussion, and the following resolution was adopted:—

Inasmuch as the so-called Abrahamitic rite is by many, and the most competent, rabbis no longer considered as a *conditio sine qua non* of receiving male gentiles into the fold of Judaism, and inasmuch

¹ *Protokolle*, pp. 39, 41.

² No. 12, 1879.

³ ר"ק דוק וזמני. Extracts from *Proceedings of Chicago Sinai Congregation* at its annual meeting, March 26, 1885, and special meeting, April 9, 1885, p. 4.

as a new legislation on this and kindred subjects is one of the most imperative and practical demands of our reform movement, be it

Resolved that a committee of five, one of them to be the president of this conference, be entrusted with framing a full report to be submitted for final action to the next conference¹.

This resolution clearly indicates the temper of the conference in the matter; but, since the next conference, called to meet in Cincinnati in June, 1886, did not, because of unforeseen circumstances, convene, the resolution of the Pittsburg conference came to naught.

On July 23, 1890, Rabbi Henry Berkowitz of Kansas City, Mo., being applied to by a Christian, who did not wish to submit to circumcision, for admission to Judaism, also addressed a circular letter to the rabbis of the country, asking for their opinion and advice. He received ten responses, eight of which were favourable to receiving the applicant without circumcision, the other two giving an adverse opinion². Dr. Berkowitz received the young man into the faith without his having submitted to the initiatory rite.

At the meeting of the Central Conference held at Baltimore in July, 1881, these responses were submitted and several papers read on the subject. The whole matter was referred to a committee of five³. At the meeting of the conference held the following year in the city of New York the report of this committee was submitted, and the whole subject was again thoroughly discussed⁴.

The resolution, as finally adopted at the meeting, reads thus:—

Resolved, that the Central Conference of American Rabbis, assembled this day in this city of New York, considers it lawful and proper for any officiating rabbi, assisted by no less than two associates, and

¹ Authentic Report, &c., *Jewish Reformer*, Jan. 22, 1886, p. 4.

² These responses, together with other papers on the Milath Gerim question, were published in the *Year Book of the Central Conference for 1891-92*, pp. 66-128.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴ *Ibid.* for 1892-93, pp. 15-99, 33-37.

in the name and with the consent of his congregation, to accept into the sacred covenant of Israel, and declare fully affiliated with the congregation **לכל דבר שבקדושה**, any honourable and intelligent person who desires such affiliation, without any initiatory rite, ceremony, or observance whatever; provided such person be sufficiently acquainted with the faith, doctrine, and religious usages of Israel; that nothing derogatory to such person's moral and mental character is suspected; that it is his or her free will and choice to embrace the cause of Judaism, and that he or she declare verbally, and in a document signed and sealed before such officiating rabbi and his associates, his or her intention and firm resolve—

1. To worship the One Sole and Eternal God and none besides him.

2. To be conscientiously governed in his or her doings and omissions in life by God's laws, ordained for the child and image of the Father and Maker of all, the sanctified son or daughter of the divine covenant.

3. To adhere in life and death, actively and faithfully, to the sacred cause and mission of Israel, as marked out in Holy Writ¹.

Thus this vexed question was finally disposed of, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis has placed itself on record, acting in the true spirit of that larger interpretation of the faith which is the only consistent course for the exponents of reformed Judaism to take.

This has been the doctrinal development, if it may be so called, of the reform movement in the United States. Accompanying this doctrinal development there have been introduced a great number of ceremonial reforms. Each one of these reforms was adopted individually by each congregation that introduced it. Every innovation met, in most instances, with stubborn opposition, and, in some cases, was the cause of division in, and secession from, the congregation. But these things are happily forgotten now. I cannot attempt to give the history of how and when each and every one of these reforms was introduced into each congregation. Sufficient to say that now, owing to these reforms in the ritual, the service in the reformed congregations is decorous, uplifting, and reverential. The

¹ *Year Book of the Central Conference for 1891-92*, p. 36.

chief reforms may be summed up as consisting in the reading of prayers in the vernacular, as discussed above, the introduction of the organ with mixed choirs, the abolition of the women's gallery¹ and the introduction of family pews, the worship with uncovered heads, the substitution of the confirmation ceremony for boys and girls in place of the Bar Mizwah for boys alone², the abolition of the calling to the Torah, the selling of Mizwoth and like practices that had become abuses, the abolition of the second-day holidays; these reforms are now accepted as a matter of course, and show how completely reformed Judaism in America has broken with rabbinical traditions. Its spiritual interpretation of the tenets of the faith rests on the highest plane of ethical monotheism, and is in a line with the most exalted thought on the universal character of Israel's faith and mission as first proclaimed by the great prophets of old.

In some congregations there has also been introduced a service on Sunday³, due to the fact that the conditions

¹ There has been a vast change in the position of woman in the synagogue, owing to the influence of the reform movement. In 1852, at the dedication of a synagogue in Cincinnati, the question of permitting women to participate in the choir aroused much discussion, the opposition holding that woman, according to Jewish custom, could have no voice in the public services; the matter was decided in the affirmative only after great efforts had been put forth by the liberal wing. Nowhere was the orientalism of the synagogue more pronounced than in the inferior position assigned to woman in the public religious life. It is a far way from that discussion in 1852 to the action of a number of congregations admitting woman to full membership with the same privileges and prerogatives as the men. At the convention of the Union of American Congregations held at Baltimore in 1891, the delegation of the Berith Kodesh congregation of Rochester, N.Y., counted a woman as one of its number. The recently organized Council of Jewish Women, with its numerous branches throughout the country, offers striking testimony of the active rôle that woman is now playing in the public religious life of the Jews of this country.

² See the author's "Confirmation in the Synagogue," in the *Year Book of the Central Conference* for 1890-91, pp. 43-58.

³ The first attempt to hold services on Sunday was made in Baltimore in 1854 by a society calling itself "The Hebrew Reformed Association";

of life are such as to preclude many of the people from attending divine service on the historical Sabbath. In but one congregation, however, Sinai of Chicago, has the service on Saturday been discontinued¹. In the other congregations services are held on both days.

*The Union of American Congregations and the
Hebrew Union College.*

Almost from the moment of his coming to this country Dr. I. M. Wise had urged the formation of a union of the congregations of the land and the foundation of a theological seminary. As early as 1848 he issued an appeal for a union among the congregations; in 1854 he established the Zion College Association, which opened Zion College in

after a brief trial of six months the attempt was abandoned. It was in the same city that Sunday services were again instituted twenty years later in the Har Sinai congregation, where, with occasional lapses, they have continued to this day. The first Sunday service in Sinai Temple, Chicago, was held on January 18, 1874. The next congregation to make provision for a service on Sunday was the Keneseth Israel of Philadelphia, in accordance with a resolution adopted by the Board of Trustees on October 13, 1881, and endorsed by the congregation.

At the Pittsburg conference, in the session held on November 18, 1885, the question was earnestly considered, and the following statement unanimously adopted as the sense of the conference: "Whereas we recognize the importance of maintaining the historical Sabbath as a bond with our great past and the symbol of the unity of Judaism the world over; and whereas, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that there is a vast number of working men and others who, from some cause or other, are not able to attend the services on the sacred day of rest; be it resolved that there is nothing in the spirit of Judaism or its laws to prevent the introduction of Sunday services in localities where the necessity for such services appears or is felt."

Since then Sunday services have been instituted, and are at present conducted in the following congregations, besides the three already mentioned: Emmanuel, New York City; Berith Kodesh, Rochester, N.Y.; Adath Israel, Boston, Mass.; Tiffereth Israel, Cleveland, O.; Isaiah, Chicago; Shaare Emeth, and Temple Israel, St. Louis, Mo.; and Adath Israel, Louisville, Ky.

¹ This took place in 1887.

Cincinnati; this, however, had but a very short life. For many years he continued to advocate these his pet ideas, in season and out of season. At the rabbinical conference held in Cincinnati in 1871 the matter received definite expression in the following resolution:—

The members of the conference take upon themselves the duty to bring prominently before the congregations, to advocate and to support by their influence, the following project of co-operation of the American Hebrew Congregations:—

The congregations to unite themselves into a Hebrew Congregational Union with the object to preserve and advance the union of Israel; to take proper care of the development and promulgation of Judaism; to establish and support a scholastic institute, and the library appertaining thereto, for the education of rabbis, preachers and teachers of religion; to provide cheap editions of the English Bible and textbooks for the schools of religious instruction; to give support to weak congregations, and to provide such other institutions which elevate, preserve, and promulgate Judaism.

Resolved, that whenever twenty congregations, with no less than two thousand contributing male members, shall have declared, in accordance with the preceding resolution, their resolution to enter the H. C. U., the said committee shall convoke the synod to meet at such time and place as may be most satisfactory to the co-operating congregations.

For two years after that Dr. Wise agitated the object almost every week in his organ, *The Israelite*. His persistent efforts were finally rewarded. On July 8, 1873, the organization of the Union of American Congregations was effected at a meeting in the city of Cincinnati by thirty-four congregations, numbering eighteen hundred members. This union, which now comprises ninety congregations, counting nine thousand and seventy members, meets in council every two years: each congregation is represented by delegates; rabbis and laymen meet for mutual discussion and interchange of opinion. The union was originally intended to include congregations of all shades of religious opinion, and therefore it was determined that no questions of religious belief or practice should be discussed at its meetings, in order to avoid dissension.

However, it has now become practically a union of the reformed congregations.

Its greatest achievement has been the establishment of the Hebrew Union College, which was opened on October 3, 1875. This is the theological training school of reformed Judaism in America. The first class, consisting of four, was graduated in 1883. The number of rabbis that have gone forth from its halls now reaches fifty-one. All these organizations and institutions testify to the activity and energy of the reform movement in American Judaism. The Union of Congregations, the Central Conference of Rabbis, the Hebrew Union College, the Union Prayer Book, are notable achievements. They and the other activities mentioned in this essay are warrant sufficient of the spirit that animates the earnest workers in the cause of Judaism in the land where it has had the fullest opportunity to grow and develop without hindrance from government or obstacle from environment. Judaism has celebrated a rebirth in America, and Prof. Moritz Lazarus of Berlin was possibly a true prophet when, several years ago, he wrote that the future of the faith lies in this land, and that the inspiration in coming days will go forth from hence. At any rate, it is the reform movement that has revived Judaism, and it is the interpretation of the faith given by the reform movement that is the characteristic aspect of the religion in the United States of America.

DAVID PHILIPSON.

CINCINNATI, O., U.S.A.